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ments, ritually bores the ears of boys and girls. Formerly, the ritual boring of a boy's ears was an important initiation rite, marking his transition from boyhood to adulthood.

The clothes washed by the washerman (Maḍivāḷa) are not only clean but ritually pure (*maḍi*), and ritually pure clothes should be worn on ritual occasions. The washerman's services are necessary on every ritual occasion. For instance, at a Coorg wedding he has the duty of supplying clean cloths for the bridal pair to walk on, and cloths to cover the ceiling above the bridal seat. He has similar duties at the festival of the village-deity. He also acts as the ritual purifier when a birth or death occurs in a Coorg house. But some Coorgs, especially those in Kiggaṭnāḍ, resort to the Brahmin for ritual purification.

Contact with a barber defiles a Coorg, and every Coorg has a purificatory bath after being shaved by a barber. Such a bath is necessary in order to restore the shaved person to normal ritual status. The barber's services are, however, indispensable at a wedding and a funeral, and shaving is an essential preliminary act for men on ritual occasions.

The Mēda occupies a very low position in the caste hierarchy. He makes artefacts like baskets, fish-traps, and receptacles of cane, *vōḷé* reed, and bamboo. He is indispensable at a Coorg festival, dance or hunt, where he beats his tom-tom. The Mēda is a byword for stupidity in Coorg folklore.

The strength of the bond prevailing between the Coorg master and his Poleya servant expressed itself in ritual. Formerly, one or two members of the Poleya servant-family observed ritual mourning for their dead master or mistress. On the day their mourning terminated they were given gifts of cloths and provisions by their masters. The Poleya servants (men) also performed a mourning dance (*anga kaḷi*) in front of the master's house before the corpse was removed to the burial-ground.

At a Coorg wedding, just as the bridal pair are about to leave the bride's house for the groom's, a Poleya servant of the bride's family comes forward, holding a torch in his left hand, while he spreads a cloth before them. The groom throws money, equivalent to a *paṇa* (about three annas), on the cloth. The Poleya then removes the cloth, thus enabling the bridal pair to proceed: contact with a cloth touched by a Poleya defiles a member of a high caste.

Sometimes ritual occasions stress the structural distance that

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in a village every *okka* must send at least one man and one woman to help in the work of the wedding, what he really means is that when there is a wedding among Coorgs or other high castes, every high caste *okka* must send one man and one woman. This does not, however, apply to the lowest castes. The latter, of course, do their share of the wedding work, but they are not included in the rule mentioned above. The contribution of the low castes is essential on every occasion, but they co-operate at a different level from the high castes. Again, where there is a wedding or death among the lowest castes, the high castes certainly help, but do not otherwise participate in the event. In brief, the solidarity of a caste results in a stressing of the ties between the members of the same caste living in different villages, while the solidarity of a village results in stressing the ties between members of different castes living in the same village. Caste ties cut across village ties, while village ties both limit the extension of caste ties beyond the village and stress the interdependence of the various castes forming a local community.

The unity of the village is stressed when disaster overtakes one of the *okkas*. For instance, when a house is destroyed by fire every *okka* in the village has to contribute in cash, kind, and labour towards the building of a new house and the maintenance of the unlucky *okka* till they are able to stand on their own feet. The latter are required to repay the money and goods given to them some time after they have recovered from the disaster. Several years ago the Kōṭera house in Bāḍaga village was destroyed by fire and the entire village co-operated in building them a new house.

When a death occurs among Coorgs, the news is announced by the firing of a rifle at regular intervals. Everyone who hears the shots has to suspend all work, including agricultural work, and proceed at once to the mourning house. The news of the death is also communicated through messengers belonging to the Poleya caste, and the Poleya servant of any Coorg house may be commandeered for this purpose. The master may not object.

Every *okka* in the village has to stand by the bereaved *okka* during the mourning period. They are required to attend to the fields and gardens of the bereaved *okka* till the latter are freed from the ritual mourning. They have also to supply the bereaved *okka* with food until the corpse is removed from the house: there

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is a taboo on cooking being done in the mourning house till the corpse is removed.

On certain occasions the entire village co-operates, though the lower castes co-operate at a different level from others. An example will make clear what we mean. Every caste in the village co-operates during the harvest festival of Coorgs. It is the harvest festival of *Coorgs* alone, and not, for instance, of the Mēdas or Poleyas. The Mēdas beat the tom-tom and Poleyas play on their pipes to the dancing of Coorgs. Every Coorg *okka* has to send all the adult men in it to the village dance and hunt. Poleyas and Mēdas act as beaters at this hunt while the other castes do the shooting. Later, there is a dinner for the entire village, called, appropriately enough, *ūrormé*, i.e. 'village harmony', where the game killed in the hunt is cooked. Every male member of the village participates in this dinner, Coorgs and equivalent castes sitting together, while Mēdas and Poleyas form separate groups. The meat is cooked by Coorgs and equivalent castes, while every house brings its own supply of *puṭṭ*, or cooked rice-flour, which is eaten with the curry. The Brahmin does not participate in the village dinner as it is cooked by castes lower to him in the hierarchy. Besides, he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. It may be noted that the Brahmin is almost as frequently excluded from village activities as the Untouchable. The Brahmin does not hunt or dance, nor does he favour the propitiation of deities with animal sacrifice and liquor.

Every member of the village is required to observe certain rules during the harvest festival. He has to keep the door of his house open and the sacred domestic lamps lit. He must be hospitable to parties of singers and dancers and mix with other villagers. He must refrain from abusing and fighting even if there is provocation from the other party.

Though parties of Coorg singers did not visit the houses of Mēdas and Poleyas, even the latter were required to observe the rules. Every caste, including Mēdas and Poleyas, was present when inquiry into cases of breaches of rules took place.

A wedding in a Coorg house requires the co-operation of all the castes in the village, and the fee payable to them is fixed by custom. It is the same with the festival of the village-deity, though sometimes the Poleyas are almost entirely excluded from this festival. During the festival of Kētrappa at Bēngūr, the Poleyas may not be

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776 778 considered sacred, and it is not permitted to cut it down. A woman in her periods is not allowed to go near the platform as cobra-deities are considered to be specially sensitive to defilement. If this rule is not respected, she, and probably the *okka* of which she is a member, will suffer misfortune. The cobra is a sacred creature and he who kills it will suffer from a skin disease like leucoderma.

243 778 There is an attitude of ritual respect towards the ancestral rice-field. This is specially noticeable when the crop is standing: a man may not wear sandals while walking through it, or hold an umbrella over his head, or whistle.

The rice-field is divided into a number of ridged-up plots and the central plot of the rice-field is regarded as particularly sacred. [846] Formerly it was the custom to bury the umbilical cord of the eldest son in the central plot. A man is supposed to have a special affinity to the place where his umbilical cord is buried. If a Coorg boy is found going to a particular place frequently, his elders twit him, [871] 'Is your umbilical cord buried there?' Nowadays the umbilical cord is buried in the yard of the palace of Mercara, or in a school-compound, because Coorgs want their sons to do well in examinations and become high government officials.

764 778 A part of the ancestral estate is used for burying or cremating the dead members of the *okka*. The part where corpses are buried is called *kēkaḷa* while the adjoining part used for cremation is called *tūṭangāḷa*.[1] It is sacred, but in an undesirable way: the term 'bad-sacred' has been used to denote such a ritual condition. (Bad-sacredness includes within itself both 'defilement and 'inauspi- [783] ciousness'.) A visit to the burial-ground defiles a person and a bath is necessary to restore him to normal ritual status.

764 775 The burial-ground for children may be near the house, whereas that for adults must be as far away as possible. The ghosts of adults [858] are harmful, while children's ghosts are comparatively harmless. An adult has a social personality, whereas a child does not have one. An adult occupies a social role or several social roles. The ghost of a headman or hero or a particularly evil man is more powerful than [765] that of an ordinary man. The mourning-period also varies according to age and social importance of the deceased.

[1] Amongst Coorgs, the corpses of elders and important people are cremated, [564] while the corpses of children and unimportant people are buried. The Brahmins, however, cremate all dead persons except infants, and in many parts of south India castes which want to rise in status give up burial for cremation.

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century. The exclusive shaving of the face as distinct from the shaving of the face along with the head also came into vogue at the same time, and moustaches, which were only removed at the death of a very close relative, began to disappear entirely.

Marriage conferred on a man the right to have his head shaved periodically, and a bachelor was not entitled to it unless he had undergone the ear-boring *mangala*. The latter ritual conferred social adulthood on a male: in the folksong about the hero Kaiyandira Appayya it is seen that he successfully claims to be an adult on the strength of the fact that his friends, all boys tending cattle, performed this ritual for him in the jungle.

The ear-boring *mangala* has now entirely disappeared, and I learn that even fifty years ago it was only performed very rarely, and that, too, as a votive offering to a deity. But though the ritual had disappeared the concepts associated with it continued to exist for some time afterwards. It was considered improper for an adult to be without ear-rings, and such men were not admitted to the temple of Iggutappa in Nālknāḍ. If a Coorg died without his ears being bored, the corpse's ears were pierced before burial.

The ear-boring *mangala* was the first of several *mangalas* for a male, and the head was shaved for the first time on this occasion. The performance of this *mangala* conferred certain privileges on the individual in question, one of which being that he could have his face shaved periodically by a barber.

At the various *mangalas* shaving is a preparatory ritual act. On these occasions it is followed by a bath and by the wearing of ritually pure robes. These preliminary rites make the subject pure, and while in this condition he performs certain rites, or others perform certain rites towards him.

The form of shaving prevalent normally is different from that prevalent at mourning. Normally the tuft at the crown and the moustache have to be left untouched at shaving, while at mourning it is obligatory, at any rate for the chief male mourners, to have their heads and faces shaved entirely. Other close relatives who are junior to the dead person are recommended to follow the example of the chief mourners, but it does not seem to be obligatory for them. The mourners get themselves shaved on the morning following the disposal of the corpse; and this shave marks the beginning of ritual mourning. The mourners may not have another shave while ritual mourning lasts. In the case of the eldest son and

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765 302 widower, ritual mourning lasts sometimes six months, and during this entire period shaving is forbidden.

765 182 The restriction on shaving is only one of several restrictions imposed on the mourners, and in order to understand its meaning completely all the restrictions have to be taken into consideration. The mourners are forbidden to consume meat, honey, betel leaves and areca-nut, mushrooms, and liquor. They may not go to a temple, or wedding, or dance. They have to wear mourning dress, and they have to perform certain ritual. It is necessary to emphasize that these restrictions have to be observed. They show to the outside world that the mourner is 'concerned' in the death that has occurred.

There are degrees of 'concern': the close relatives have to show greater concern than distant kindred. The mourning period is longer for them, and they are marked off from the others in other ways too. The obligatory expression of concern in the culturally defined manner serves to maintain a certain kinship and social structure.

VII

783 [343] The preparatory, purificatory ritual act which comes after shaving is a ritual bath. It is usual for three[1] married women to give this ritual bath to the subject. The *guḍḍa* or bathroom is a room outside the main building of the ancestral house, and the subject [533] marches in state to it. The procession is headed by pipers and drummers followed by four Coorgs beating a tiny drum and singing the traditional 'road song'. At a wedding, after the groom [585] returns in state from his bath, the best man[2] helps to dress him in ritual robes and ornaments.

[515] A Coorg washes his hands, feet, and face before saluting the sacred wall-lamp every day, morning and evening; and on festival days he takes a bath and changes into clothes washed by the washerman. Both bath and change of clothes are preliminary to prayer.

It is usual to approximate physical impurity to ritual impurity.

[777] [1] Odd numbers have ritual value in Coorg as elsewhere in south India. Number '3' is specially sacred. A person usually walks thrice round a sacred object like a tripod stool, temple, and funeral pyre.

[2] The best man (*bōjakāra*) is a married man, and the bride has a matron of honour (*bōjakarati*).

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An unwashed state is an impure state, and taking a bath and changing into clean clothes alter the ritual status of the subject. While this is generally true we must, however, guard ourselves against completely identifying physical purity or cleanliness with ritual purity. It is not every bath that changes the ritual status of the subject.

A ritual bath alters the subject's ritual status. It adds to his ritual purity and makes him fit to pray, or to be possessed by a deity. But sometimes the emphasis is on the bath terminating a condition of ritual impurity. That is to say, instead of a bath adding purity to normal ritual status, it might only be putting an end to ritual impurity, which is a condition inferior to normal ritual status. For instance, a mother is ritually impure for fifty-nine days after the birth of her child. On the twelfth day, however, she attains partial purity after a bath and this enables her to enter the central hall and kitchen but not the south-western room. The child is ritually given a name on the twelfth day.

But complete purity is only attained on the sixtieth day when a ceremony called *aruvud* (literally, the sixtieth) is performed. The mother has a bath, changes her clothes, marks her forehead with three horizontal stripes of *vibhūti* or sacred ashes,[1] and then performs certain rites.

The important point to note here is that on both the twelfth and the sixtieth days a bath marks the termination of ritual impurity. It is also preliminary to the performance of certain rites.

That a ritual bath is different from an ordinary bath is made clear from the fact that the confined mother has an elaborate massage and bath every day, beginning with the day the baby is born. The massage and bath last several hours, but their object is therapeutic and not ritual. It is only on the twelfth and sixtieth days that a bath alters the ritual condition of the mother.[2] All baths clean the body, but only some purify as well as clean.

Greater ritual purity or merit ensues from a cold-water bath than from a hot-water bath. If the subject takes a cold-water bath while wearing his ritual robes, even greater ritual merit is acquired. Thus

[1] All over south India devotees of the god Shiva mark their foreheads every morning with three horizontal stripes of *vibhūti* or sacred ashes.

[2] Orthodox Brahmins frequently keep a cloth which they dip in water and squeeze dry and tie round their waists while performing certain rites. This cloth is frequently not very clean, whereas a snow-white *dhoti* brought by the washerman is ritually impure.

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765 783 mourners are required to perform certain rites while their clothes are wet and dripping.

On the twelfth or sixteenth day of the death of a person the ceremony of *māda* is performed and this puts an end to ritual mourning for all except the first-grade mourners. Until the performance of *māda*, the mourners offer food every day to the spirit of the dead person. When making these offerings they are required frequently to take a plunge in a well or pond with their clothes on. But this is not a pleasant thing to do, and especially so in the wet and cold seasons, and consequently, after the first plunge for the day, the mourners content themselves by washing their hands and feet, and wetting a corner of their waist-cloths. This is regarded as sufficient to meet the ends of ritual purity. Such a traditionally sanctioned mechanism makes ritual simpler and less inconvenient to the persons concerned.

The widower (or widow) and eldest son go, after the mourning period is over, to Bhāgamaṇḍla where the rivers Kāvēri and Kanaké meet. After a shave, they bathe in the confluence of the two rivers, and then offer balls of rice-flour to the dead person's spirit. This is followed by a visit to the temple of Bhaganḍēshwara [778] where the mourners offer worship. Subsequently they go to the source of the River Kāvēri, bathe in the larger spring, worship the smaller spring, and then return home.

783 Two ideas can be distinguished in the above ritual acts: (1) a ritual bath alters the ritual status of the subject; and (2) bathing in a sacred river is not only purifying in a ritual sense, but also 184 removes the sins of the bather. This latter idea is shared by Hindus all over India, and when a Coorg bathes in the Kāvēri he participates in a ritual idiom that spreads all over India. The Kāvēri is a sacred river for Hindus in every part of south India, and it is even called the '*dakshiṇa ganga*' or the Southern Ganges. Bathing in the Ganges, or in any other sacred river, rids a person of the sins he [782] has committed both in this and in a previous existence. It confers on him spiritual merit (*puṇya*).

[779] Sanskritic Hinduism has incorporated into itself the idea that bathing changes the ritual status of the bather, and has elaborated it in such a manner that pious Hindus believe in the sin-cleansing and merit-conferring powers of sacred rivers.

846 On the seventh or twelfth day after the birth of a child in a Coorg house, the washerman comes with a vessel full of water in which

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Nowadays, the black, woollen, half-sleeved gown is coming into fashion. Every Coorg who can afford it sports it at festivals, dances, and weddings. It has become a mark of wealth and status, and the white cotton gown which has superior ritual status is becoming almost a symbol of poverty. But even now the subject of a *mangala*, as distinct from others who are not as important, wears a white gown. Any suggestion that he should discard the white gown in favour of the black would meet with opposition from one and all. It may be mentioned here that the hero Kaiyandira Appayya, to whom reference has already been made, was prohibited from doing a number of things which an ordinary Coorg did, such as handling a plough, eating bamboo shoots, and wearing a black gown. He was required to wear a white gown always.

The corpse, which is in some respects treated as similar to the subject of a *mangala*, is dressed in a white gown, but with the underside on top if it is going to be cremated, and with the left side over the right if it is going to be buried.

Formerly, mourners also wore the white gown, but in a particular way: the right hand did not pass through the right arm of the gown, but instead it was allowed to hang limp from the right shoulder. The gown was secured at the waist by a black sash instead of a red one.

The white gown is worn on all important ritual occasions. Ritual occasions are either auspicious or inauspicious, and there is need to differentiate between them. Hence, though the subject of *mangala*, corpse and mourner, are all dressed in a white gown, the mode of wearing it is different in each case. The subject of *mangala* wears it in the normal way, while in the case of a corpse it is reversed, and in the case of the mourner the right arm drops loosely from the shoulder.

Nowadays, however, all active mourners wear a white waist-cloth (*muṇḍu*) and shoulder-cloth (*tuṇḍu*). In the case of women mourners, two of the four corners of the shoulder-cloth are tied in a knot in front in such a way that the breasts are covered. A waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth are normally the ritual dress of Hindus in Malabar.

either party. Between Mercara and the Wynāḍ border, in Kiggaṭnāḍ, only the bride wears a veil, and the groom removes her veil prior to consummating the marriage on the second night. The veil is generally uncommon among Hindus in south India and is worn only by the women of the ruling castes. It is likely that the women of the royal families in pre-British Coorg wore the veil regularly.

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764 272 On the day after the cremation of a corpse, the dead man's son goes to the burial-ground, and on the spot where the dead man was buried he pours successively a vessel of water and a vessel of milk.

Milk is a very valued commodity, and the ritual giving of milk [431] indicates that solidarity is, or ought to be, prevalent between the giver and the recipient. It is also a symbol of pleasure, luxury, and [828] happiness, and consequently mourners abstain from it while they [765] offer it to the spirit of the departed person. The mourners also abstain from other valued objects like curd, honey, mushrooms, meat, and betel leaves and areca-nut, which are again offered to the dead person's spirit.

A kinsman who drank milk during the mourning-period would be guilty of impiety towards the dead person. In the neighbouring Kannaḍa country it is considered a very bitter abuse to tell a person, 'I will drink milk when you die.'

[302] The use of milk is extended from solidarity rites to other rites which have either no reference to solidarity at all or at best only a very indirect one. While ordinarily water is used in shaving a man, milk is used while shaving a bridegroom. The dish containing the milk and the shavings is later emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding [844] tree like the jack tree (*artocarpus integrifolia*). The placenta is similarly buried at the foot of a milk-exuding tree. One of the five pillars of a marriage *pandal* has to be a branch of a milk-exuding tree. After a corpse has been cremated the bones are consigned either to a river or buried at the foot of a milk-exuding tree. At [765] mourning, leaf-cups made from the leaves of the jack tree are used to offer food to the spirit of the departed person.

XII

585 431 Everyone who performs *mūrta* to the subject should give a money-gift, and the three married women are expected to give a gold coin (*pombaṇa*) each. At a wedding the mother of the bride (or groom), and the groom while performing *mūrta* to the bride, have to give a purse containing several coins, one of which should be a gold coin.

A money-gift has to be given not only at *mangala* but on other occasions as well: relatives who come to pay their last respects to the dead man perform a series of solidarity rites at the end of which they give a money-gift. Again, an infant has to be given a money-

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XIV

533 A band is considered essential to every ritual occasion: at *mangalas*, calendar festivals, and festivals of village-deities a band plays most of the time.

[585] A close relative comes to a wedding accompanied by his own band. He must be received by the hosts with band, and again, when he departs, the hosts must accompany him a little distance with their band leading the way. When the relative finally takes leave of the hosts he pays the latters' band three *paṇas*, one for the men blowing the horns, another for the pipers, and the third for the drummers.

[764] Relatives coming to pay their last respects to the dead man are also required to be accompanied by their band. If they are not accompanied by their own band, they arrange to hire the services of the local band, at some distance from the mourning-house.

● [765] A band plays before a mourning-house too, but the beat (*chāvu paré* = death-beat) employed on this occasion is distinctive, and it may not be employed on an auspicious occasion.

533 585 [558] The presence of a band testifies to the social importance of the occasion or person. A wedding at which there was no band would be inconceivable to a Coorg. Again, if at a wedding an important guest were not received with a band, he would regard it as an insult. Coorgs have an elaborate code of courtesy, and this has to be scrupulously observed.

[574] The *okkas* of the bride and groom have each to give several dinners during the wedding. These dinners are of two kinds: one in which the chief guests are the members of the particular bridal party's own village, and another in which the important guests are from other villages.

621 585 574 The above distinction is important, as it throws light on the social structure. A village forms a unity, and ideally speaking it is not only the bride's (or groom's) *okka*, but her (or his) entire village which ought to act as hosts. Formerly they did not sit down to dinner with the guests from other villages, but waited on the latter along with the members of the host *okka*. They sat down to dinner later.

On the day before the wedding, every house in the village has to send one man and one woman to the bridal house to help in the wedding work. They have to do every kind of work which the

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621 wedding involves, but their primary duties seem to be cooking the
585 huge dinners and serving them to the guests, and looking after the
574 guests generally.

After the villagers have arrived the head of the bridal house requests them to take charge of the wedding for him and to exercise due economy in the discharge of their duties. In the evening there is a dinner for the villagers which is called *ūrū patti* (village dinner), and which seems to mark their assumption of responsibility. There is another village dinner on the day after the marriage at which the villagers return the 'ladle and spoon' to the bridal *okka*. The return of the 'ladle and spoon' marks the end of the villagers' duties at the wedding. The villagers apologize to the head of the bridal *okka* for any faults they might have committed in the discharge of their duties, and the head thanks them for the great help rendered by them.

621 The members of a village in which a death has occurred are
● 765 required to help the bereaved *okka* in several ways during mourning
574 and the latter *okka* give the villagers two dinners at the conclusion of ritual mourning to express their thanks. The services rendered, and the dinners given, are both obligatory, and they are among the many links which bind together the members of the village community.

621 Besides the above dinners the members of a village occasionally
574 dine together and this is referred to as '*ūrormé*' or 'village harmony'. The solidarity of the village expresses itself at these dinners, even though all the castes in the village do not sit together at them. It has to be remembered in this connexion that the nuclear unit of the Coorg community, the *okka*, is normally a commensal unit. The sub-caste too occasionally dines together, and one of the punishments inflicted on the excommunicated man is that he may not be admitted to the caste dinners.

585 On the day after the wedding the bride goes to the groom's
574 house where a few rites are performed which symbolize the admission of the bride into the groom's *okka*. The marriage is consummated that night, and the bride returns to her natal house after spending a few days in the groom's house. She is not allowed to be seen by members of her natal village until a dinner has been given to them.

Richter tells us that formerly the bride returning to her natal home was 'treated as unclean', 'shut up like a woman after child-

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food in one form or another to the spirit of the departed person. The mourner has to observe punctiliously a number of rules and restrictions while making these offerings: he has to have a bath in cold water, wear ritually pure robes, and observe a fast. He starts cooking his food only after he has made the ritual offerings for the day. Many kinds of food are prohibited to him during mourning, and he may have only one proper meal every day.

Conditions like a bath, the wearing of ritually pure robes, and the observance of a total fast till the completion of the ritual are also observed while performing good-sacred ritual. A person takes a bath and wears ritually pure robes before worshipping a deity. He breaks his fast only after the worship is over. While *polé* and *maḍi* are normally mutually opposed, the mourner who is in a condition of *tiké* fulfils the same preliminary ritual rules as the devotee about to pray. The mourner when offering food to the spirit of the dead person is inhabiting a world which is very far removed from that of the devotee about to pray. The former is living in a world of ritual impurity, whereas the latter is living in the world of ritual purity. But within the world of ritual impurity the mourner attains a form of ritual purity prior to performing the most important rites: in other words he attains *maḍi* in *polé*.

The concepts of normal ritual status, pollution, and purity apply not only to Coorgs but to all castes, including Untouchables. An Untouchable, like any high-caste man, is normally *mailigé*, and only occasionally and for comparatively short periods is he *maḍi* or *polé*. It should not be assumed that an Untouchable is in a permanent and unalterable condition of ritual impurity. While contact with an Untouchable always pollutes a high-caste man, an Untouchable, considered by himself, is as subject to the various ritual states as anyone else.

VI

A few words are necessary here on the length of the period of mourning. For everyone except the dead person's spouse and eldest son, ritual mourning ends on the day the *māda* ceremony is performed. Nowadays, *māda* is *usually* performed on the twelfth day. But sometimes, in the case of a big headman or official, it is performed on the sixteenth or twenty-eighth day. The length of the mourning period is thus an index of the social importance

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765 783 of the dead person. This statement receives additional support from the fact that no ritual mourning is observed for an infant: only the parents of the dead infant take a bath and change their robes after the corpse has been buried. An elder, unlike an infant, is socially important and has a voice in the affairs of his *okka* and village. Ritual mourning is quite different from grief at the death of the person in question. The parents of the infant might be steeped in sorrow, while the death of a decrepit and senile elder might actually mean very little grief. Still, in the former case no ritual mourning is observed, whereas in the latter case it might be prolonged to the sixteenth or twenty-eighth day.

[178] Elderly Coorgs say that mourning periods are becoming shorter, and this is not surprising as the kin-groups are becoming smaller and the old values are giving place to new ones. Formerly *māda* was usually performed, for an elder, on the twenty-eighth day and *not* on the sixteenth. *Mādam* in Tamil means 'month', and there are twenty-eight days in a lunar month.

As has already been mentioned, the performance of *māda* puts an end to ritual mourning for all excepting the surviving spouse and eldest son. These two have to observe ritual mourning until they have performed *dīkshé uttuva* (untying of mourning), which is usually a few weeks, if not months, after *māda*. Between *māda* and *dīkshé uttuva* the two most important mourners do not perform any rites, but merely observe some of the food taboos and wear mourning dress.

Speaking very broadly, the length of the mourning period is an index of the closeness of the bond prevailing between the dead person and the mourners. This holds good for birth-pollution too: while pollution ends for all relatives on the twelfth day, it ends for [593] the mother on the sixtieth day. The mother-child bond is the closest of all kinship bonds, and this fact finds expression in the mother being subject to birth-pollution longer than everybody else.

VII

Senior relatives of the dead person do not play an active part in ritual mourning. This does not, however, mean that they are completely exempt from it, especially those who are members of the same house as the dead person. As members of the pollution house (*tīké manė*), they may not salute anyone, nor allow anyone to

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

salute them. They may not go to a wedding or dance. In general senior relatives are not supposed to observe any food restrictions or wear a special mourning dress, but when they are members of the same house as the dead person they observe the food taboos, refrain from shaving, and wear only white. They have been classed as mourners of the third grade.

The widow or widower is the most important mourner among Coorgs, even more important than the eldest son of the dead person. The conjugal tie receives the maximum amount of emphasis: the surviving spouse has to be a mourner of the first grade except when prevented by serious illness. The eldest son, too, is usually a mourner of the first grade, though he does not seem to be as essential as the surviving spouse. It is interesting to note that a daughter may sometimes be called upon to be a mourner of the first grade.

The widower is usually senior to his dead wife except in the case of a leviratic marriage when he might be her junior. With the exception of the surviving spouse, all 'active mourners' are invariably the dead person's juniors. They are either mourners of the second or first grade. The Koḍagi term for mourning of the second grade is *mēngaté*, which means 'standing apart', or 'not mixing', and for mourning of the first grade, *kuḷik nippad*, or 'standing for bathing'.

All juniors to the dead person in the *okka* of which the dead person was a member have to observe mourning of the third grade at least. Certain relatives, such as a married woman's younger brother and a man's married sister, are also required to observe mourning of the third grade even though they do not belong to the same *okka* as the dead person.

Formerly, a male and female member from the servant Poleya[1] family observed mourning of the third grade for a dead member of their master's household. They observed all the food and dress restrictions which third-grade mourners observed, but they did not perform the rites which the Coorg mourners perform. The headman of the master *okka* gave the Poleya mourners mourning-dress to wear, and at the conclusion of mourning gave them provisions for a dinner, and a *sari* for the woman mourner, and cloth for a gown for the man mourner. Nowadays members of the servant family do not observe ritual mourning: the tie is not strong enough to express itself in ritual.

[1] The Poleya mourners had to be juniors to the dead person.

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Mourners of the third grade have to abstain from meat, fish, mushrooms, liquor, honey, milk, and betel leaves and areca-nut. The men are required to have their heads and faces shaved completely. They may not wear any jewellery, nor tie the red sash round their waists. They have to avoid wearing coloured garments, especially garments coloured red.

Women mourners of the third grade are required to remove their jewellery, except such as is symbolical of the married state. The widow of the dead man has to remove even that. Women mourners dress themselves in a white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. The upper ends of the former are tied in a knot at the chest.

It has been mentioned earlier that all men mourners indicate the beginning of mourning by having the head and face shaved on the morning following the disposal of the corpse. They may not have another shave till the *māda* day, when ritual mourning ends for all except the first-grade mourners.

Nowadays *māda* is performed usually on the twelfth day of death, and on this day, after the afternoon meal has been eaten by all the mourners, three men mourners have their faces shaved by the barber. This shave is one of the ritual acts marking the end of mourning and the resumption of normal social life by all except the first-grade mourners.

The men who are observing first-grade mourning have to wear either a white gown or a shoulder-cloth (*tuṇḍu*) and waist-cloth (*muṇḍu*). A mourner does not usually wear a gown nowadays, but if he wears one, he may not pass his right arm through the right arm of the gown.

Until the *māda* day, first-grade mourners take a cold-water bath every morning, after which they perform the rites prescribed for the day. They then start cooking their meal, which is done in the cattle-shed, or any other sheltered spot outside the main building. They may not have more than one meal per day, and they have to pay scrupulous attention to the various food restrictions. They are, however, allowed to eat a few fruits at night.

The surviving spouse has to observe more restrictions than other first-grade mourners. He (or she) may not sleep on a cot, or sit on a plank. He may not eat from a dining-dish (*taḷi*), but has to use a leaf instead. He may not ford a river. A silver chain is wound round his left wrist, and in his left hand he holds a knife.

The *māda* ceremony frees all mourners from ritual mourning,

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

but not, however, the first-grade mourners, who are only freed at the *dīkshé uttuva* ceremony, which is performed long after the *māda*. Until then, honey and milk may not be consumed, ornaments and coloured cloths may not be worn. A woman mourner has to wear the mourning uniform of white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. A man mourner may not have his face or head shaved.

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VIII

[764]

The offer of food to the spirit of the departed person is a dominant motif in Coorg funeral ritual. When the corpse is still seated in the paved yard of the house, one of the mourners carries some cooked rice on a plantain leaf and places it at the bottom of the lane leading to the house. He also places on the plantain leaf a lighted cotton wick on a piece of coconut: this serves as a lamp. As he does this, double shots are fired from a gun. He salutes the leaf as he would a corpse, and other mourners follow him in saluting the food-offering and lamp.

The family friend places a food-bundle on the grave directly above the spot where the corpse's head rests. In case of cremation, the bundle is placed at the spot where the head lay before cremation.

On the second, third, and fourth days, the first-grade mourners offer raw, uncooked rice to fish in a pond or lake, and this is called 'water sacrifice' (*nīr beli*). On the fifth, sixth, and seventh days, 'shore sacrifice' (*karé beli*) is performed: the first-grade mourners go to the pond or lake, and each of them cooks a little rice on an improvised stove on the edge of the pond or lake. No vessel may be used for cooking this rice. A flat bit of a broken pot is used instead. This rice is then removed on to a plantain leaf which is kept on a purified spot near the stove.

On the eighth, ninth, and tenth days food is offered to crows. A sacrificial post (*beli mara*) of wood is erected in the yard before the mourning-house. A plank is fixed horizontally to the top of the post. The dead person's spouse cooks rice and prepares vegetable curry, and these are mixed and placed on a plantain leaf. The leaf is then kept on the plank on top of the post. As he (or she) keeps this, he claps his hands and shouts '*kā, kā*' (in imitation of the cawing of crows).

On the eleventh (*pannand*) day, each of the second-grade

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765 783 mourners attains partial freedom from mourning after he has offered rice mixed with *ghī*, curd, and plantain to the spirit of the departed person. The food is carried on a plantain leaf to the sacrificial post, where it is placed to be eaten by crows. As each of them comes into the house from the sacrificial post the family friend gives him (or her) a few betel leaves and areca-nut. The mourner chews the leaves and nut for a while, and then takes the chewed stuff out of his mouth and throws it on the roof. The chewing of the leaves and nut on the eleventh day is one of the ritual acts symbolizing the end of mourning.

On the *māda* day curried meat, rice, arrack, water, and betel leaves and areca-nut are offered to the dead person's spirit. A plantain leaf on which some curried meat and rice are heaped is placed at each of the three spots where the corpse was rested *en route* to the burial-ground. At the burial-ground itself the surviving spouse and two other mourners sprinkle water on the spot where the dead person was buried or cremated. Above the spot where the corpse's head rests are kept three leaves, each containing curried meat, and rice, and three leaf-cups (*challé*) containing arrack, water, and betel and nut respectively. Each of the mourners takes a betel leaf and nut from the leaf-cup in which they are kept, and chews them.

769 782 Food is offered to the dead ancestors of the *okka* at the periodical ancestor-propitiations. It is also offered to them as a body on the last days of Taurus and Cancer, and on the tenth of Libra. Besides, at every festival celebrated in the house, food is offered to the ancestors before the members of the household sit down to their meal.

The idea of offering food and drink to the dead person has a very important place in funeral ritual. The departed ancestors of the *okka* are remembered constantly, and food and drink are offered to them. They are also saluted and prayed to every day.

IX

796 783 A village is in a condition of ritual purity during the festival of the main deity of the village, a festival which usually lasts nine or eleven days, and sometimes even twenty-one days. No woman in her periods may stay in Bēngūr village during the festival of Kētrappa. She has to leave the village at once and may return only

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

the post. After crows have consumed the offerings, the family friend kicks the post awry. On the next morning he cuts it down with an axe. The first-grade mourners pull down the stoves they had erected to cook their food.

In the above ritual is seen the destruction of articles used in mourning ritual, and the purpose of such destruction is to ensure their 'confinement' to mourning. Things associated with bad-sacredness and pollution themselves become bad-sacred and polluted. Consequently, they have to be destroyed.

'Inversion' and 'confinement' underlie more funeral rites than 'identity'. But it is important to note that 'identity' also exists. For instance, the corpse, which is ritually impure, is made to lie on a pure bench in the central hall. Besides, its head is made to touch the south-western pillar.

XI

Almost every Coorg adult chews betel leaves and areca-nut, and addicts chew all day. Lime paste is spread over the rough side of the leaf and the leaf is put into the mouth along with small bits of areca-nut. Frequently bits of *catechu* and tobacco are chewed along with betel leaves and areca-nut.

At night, after dinner, the men chew betel leaves in the veranda, and the women in one of the inner rooms. A man or woman looks forward to this part of the day: there is no more work to be done and everyone is at leisure. Talk flows freely.

The chewing of betel leaves is also intimately associated with married life. The husband and wife frequently chew betel together. The wife applies the paste, folds the leaf, and gives it to her husband. Until recently, among the upper castes in south India, unmarried boys and girls were told to keep away from betel leaves and areca-nut. Indulgence in betel leaves was a symbol of the married state.

Guests are offered betel leaves and areca-nut both to chew and to carry home. Failure to offer betel leaves to a guest would almost amount to an insult.

Betel leaves and areca-nut are indispensable on any ritual occasion. They must accompany every ritual gift or payment, whether it is made to another person or spirit or deity.

The chewing of betel leaves represents full participation in

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

social life as well as a happy state. Mourners who have been withdrawn from participation in social life have to abstain from betel leaves, and the ritual chewing of betel leaves is one of the symbols of the end of mourning.

On the twelfth day, at the burial-ground, mourners offer the dead man's spirit betel leaves and areca-nut along with meat and liquor. Each of them then takes a betel leaf and areca-nut out of the leaf-cup in which they are placed and chews them. When they come home the family friend hands to each of them a few betel leaves and areca-nut which they chew for a while, and then take the chewed stuff out of their mouths and throw it on to the roof of the mourning-house. This is one of the ritual acts symbolizing the end of mourning.

It is pertinent to recall here that the second-grade mourners are given betel leaves and areca-nut on the eleventh day alone after the performance of a particular rite called *mēnguva*. The first-grade mourners perform the latter rite on the day before *māda*, but they are *not* given betel leaves and areca-nut to chew at the end of it as the most rigorous part of mourning ends for them only on the *māda* day, after returning home from the burial-ground. It is appropriate then that they should not be given betel leaves and areca-nut till the *māda* day.

A relative who chewed betel leaves during mourning would be regarded as lacking in affection towards the dead person, if not actually gloating over his death. It is not very easy to hide the chewing of betel as the mouth and lips become very red after chewing.

It has already been mentioned that there is a great difference, if not opposition, between the ritual treatment of the mourners and the corpse. Things forbidden to the mourners are offered to the spirit of the dead person. For instance, while mourners have to abstain from meat, liquor, and betel and nut, the spirit of the dead man is offered these articles. The mourners have to show their sorrow by abstaining from dietary articles which have come to stand for happiness or wealth or participation in social life. While the mourner denies to himself things that he likes or values, he offers them to the dead man's spirit to show his affection and regard. While the mourner abstains from chewing betel leaves, a paste made by pounding betel leaves and areca-nut together is put into the corpse's mouth. Later, the dead person's spirit is offered betel leaves and areca-nut.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

If the ritual chewing of betel leaves takes place earlier than the *māda* day, the chewing only confers partial freedom on the mourners. The third- and second-grade mourners are completely freed from ritual mourning only after the *māda* day, while the first-grade mourners are freed only after performing the *dīkshé uttuva* ritual, several days, if not weeks, after the *māda*. The latter may chew betel leaves after *māda*, but they have to observe certain other mourning taboos till they perform the *dīkshé uttuva* ritual.

XII

The *dīkshé uttuva* ritual consists in the offer of *piṇḍa*, or balls of rice or rice-flour, to the spirit of the departed person. The offerings are made under the guidance of a Brahmin at a centre of pilgrimage.

The *dīkshé uttuva* ritual is frequently performed on the first of Libra, or on the Shivarātri day. The former occurs in October–November, the latter in February–March. On both these days, which are regarded as sacred, people go on pilgrimages to various places along the course of the river Kāvēri, and especially to the source of the river, Tala Kāvēri.

The first of Libra and Shivarātri are not, however, the only occasions for the performance of *dīkshé uttuva*. It may be performed on a new-moon day. Generally, first-grade mourners perform *dīkshé uttuva* after the lapse of what is considered to be a 'decent interval'.

Formerly, first-grade mourners sometimes observed ritual mourning for as long as six months before performing *dīkshé uttuva*. This very rarely happens nowadays. The present tendency is to cut short the mourning period, but even now anyone who performed *dīkshé uttuva* before a month had elapsed after the death would be regarded as either wanting in affection or extremely Westernized, or both.

The first-grade mourners go to Bhāgamaṇḍla, where the river Kanaké joins the Kāvēri. The men mourners have their heads and faces shaved completely, after which they bathe in the confluence. They then dress themselves in the mourning uniform of white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. Women mourners similarly bathe and put on ritual robes.

Each of the first-grade mourners then offers a ball of rice-flour mixed with plantain fruit, honey, and a small quantity of gingelly grains. The ingredients of this offering are sold near by, and they

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

765 are mixed and offered to the spirit of the dead relative under the
788 guidance of a Brahmin priest who is paid a fee for his services.
783 The performance of *dīkshé uttuva* restores first-grade mourners to normal ritual status. Until then they are ritually impure, though this impurity is not as great as that which prevailed until the performance of *māda*, which puts an end to the mourning of all except the first-grade mourners.

The mourners then go to the temple of Bhagaṇḍēshwara and offer worship there. This is followed by a visit to the source of the river Kāvēri at the top of the Brahmagiri mountain. The river rises int wo small perennial springs, after which it disappears underground for some distance to re-emerge near Bhāgamaṇḍla.

One of the springs is larger than the other, and the mourners bathe in the larger spring, after which they offer worship to the very sacred smaller spring. The priests of these springs are Brahmins who live near by. Frequently a tiny representation (*āḷ rūpa* = man form) of the dead person embossed on a thin sheet of silver is dropped into the smaller spring. (It is in the smaller spring that the Kāvēri is annually reborn on the first of Libra, at the moment of the sun's transition from Virgo to Libra. Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of south India go to the source of the river to witness the annual rebirth.)

[171] The Coorg custom of terminating mourning at a centre of pilgrimage is a general Hindu custom. It is one of the numerous points where Coorgs touch the general Hindu ritual idiom. Every caste, sect, and tribe touches the general Hindu ritual idiom at varying numbers of points, but some part, small or large, of the ritual idiom of each group has a more restricted spread. The number of points where the ritual idiom of a local group touches the general Hindu ritual idiom has a tendency to increase with time.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

596 has been considered earlier. The economic part of the relationship
357 was certainly very important, but it was only a part of a total rela-
624 tionship which had several aspects. In Coorg folklore there are instances of a servant's great loyalty to his master, and of the latter's great affection for the former. Achchu Koṭṭa, a Poleya servant of Kallumāḍa Ayyaṇṇa, threw himself on the funeral pyre of his master. Ayyaṇṇa was very ill when a caravan from Bēngūr set out for Malabar, and Achchu Koṭṭa joined this caravan against his master's wishes. Before the caravan had crossed into Malabar, Achchu Koṭṭa heard that his master had died. Torn with grief and remorse, Achchu Koṭṭa ran back to Bēngūr only to see the flames of the funeral pyre consuming the body of his dead master. Without a second thought Achchu Koṭṭa jumped into the fire. The members of the Kallumāḍa *okka* erected a stone in memory of Achchu Koṭṭa outside their ancestor-shrine. When an ancestor-propitiation is held in the Kallumāḍa *okka*, offerings of food and drink are made to Achchu Koṭṭa's stone.[1]

● [765] Formerly, a man and woman from the servant family or families observed ritual mourning for their dead master or mistress. The bond between master and servant was strong enough to find expression in ritual.

[567] The *de facto* abolition of slavery by the opening of coffee plantations in the middle of the last century, and the great changes of the last hundred years, have contributed to the weakening of the bond between the master-*okka* and the servant families. But even now, when a Poleya does a piece of work, the mistress of the house

[461] gives him a small quantity of castor oil in addition to the wages (*kochchi*), paid in paddy. The application of castor oil to the head is supposed to have a 'cooling' effect on the entire body. Hard work, especially in the sun, brings about 'heat' in the body which needs to be 'cooled' by the application of castor oil to the head. The giving of castor oil by the mistress shows her concern for the health and well-being of the servant: it is an act of friendship.

[1] *Paṭṭōlé Paḷumé*, p. 364.

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW5 Coorg AW5

764 and well water. The corpse is then carried to the burial ground. Each [431] funeral attendant approaches, dips his finger in the copper dish, moistens the lips of the corpse with a drop or two and lays a piece of money in it. This collection goes to meet the funeral expenses. After all present have taken leave of the departed, the body is divested of its best clothes and ornaments, and decently laid into the grave or on the pile, the contents of the funeral [783] lamp dish are thrown upon it, and the covering of the grave or the burning of the pile concludes the ceremony. Pollution lasts for eleven days. In the case of a husband's funeral, the widow with two of her own and relative's children, carrying a brass vessel and a coconut, brings an earthen pot full of water and carries it round the corpse thrice on the funeral ground, the coconut is broken and its water put into a dish for the purpose already mentioned, the widow standing near the feet of the corpse and with averted face lets the earthen water pot fall sideways from her shoulder to the ground as a symbol of her shattered happiness, and the Aruva breaks the brass bangles on her wrist. The next morning the relatives remove her [765] garments, but her hair remains. As a mark of mourning, a woman leaves [589] off wearing for one year her kerchief on the head and ties it round her neck. While in this state of widowhood, she neither wears bangles, nor necklace, nor ear-ornaments.

765 On the twenty-eighth day or some time later, as late as six months, when due honour is intended for the departed, a final ceremony, the Thithi, is performed. In the interval the relatives who offer themselves for this service undergo some fasting. They forego the early and the second meal. At noon they bathe, prepare their own simple food, eat part of it themselves, and give the rest to the crows, which consume it for the dead. When the Thithi, the great day of the conclusion of funeral rites, arrives, the whole village community is again invited to the feast in honour of the departed and for the repose of the soul which ceremony concludes the funeral rites.

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4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870)1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

preparations ended, the body is carried into the middle apartment (nadumane) of the house and laid upon a funeral bed, near to which a lighted lamp is placed. Instead of oil, those who can afford it, burn on this occasion clarified cow's butter in half a cocoanut placed on a handful of rice in a copper-dish. The whole company gathers round him and breaks out into loud wailing, beating the breast, tearing the hair, much in the usual Hindu style. Guns are also fired in honor of the dead. Towards evening the corpse is brought into the yard, a little water is poured into its mouth by the relatives, and a piece of money deposited in a copper-dish, containing a little cocoamilk, saffron, rice and well-water. Now the body is carried to the burial or burning ground. Each funeral guest approaches, dips his finger into the copper dish, moistens the lips of the corpse with a drop or two, and lays a piece of money into the plate. This collection goes to defray the expenses of the funeral. After all present have thus taken their last leave of the departed, the body is deprived of the ornaments, and laid in the grave or upon the pile, the contents of the funeral-lamp-dish are thrown upon it, and now the covering of the grave, or the burning of the pile, concludes the ceremony. Before this last scene, however, some relatives must be set apart for funeral observances until the Dhiti, the great ceremonial day, which is sometimes celebrated on the 28th day after the death of a person, i. e. at the end of the lunar month in which the decease has occurred, sometimes later, as late as six months, when peculiar honor is intended to be done to the departed. In the interval the relatives, who offer themselves for this service, have to perform a lesser course of fasting. They forego the early and the second meal, at six and nine o'clock. At noon they bathe, prepare their own food, eat part of it themselves (it consists of rice and a little pickled vegetables), and give the rest to the crows, which consume it for the dead. When the Dhiti,

764 [354] [239] [177] [431] 765 ● [785] [262] [825]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

765 the great day of the conclusion of funeral rites, arrives, the whole village community is again invited to a feast in honor of the departed and for the quiet of his soul, and thus the last end of a Coorg's earthly course has come.

764 539 The Coorg funeral song is most pathetic and touches a kindred chord in every sorrowing heart:—

Funeral Song.

Woe! my father, thou art gone!
Woe is me! For ever gone!
Gone with all thy soul of virtue!
Oh! how can I live my father!
Woe! thy days are now concluded,
And the share, assigned to thee
By the Lord, is now consumed
And no further portion granted.
Oh! thy wish was not to die,
But to stay among the living.
Surely, man came to this world
But to die; not one of us
Is exempted from this doom.
Onward! onward roll the years;
Oh! how soon were thine concluded!
Like the eagle in the sky
Thou wast roaming here on earth.
Woe! the string of choicest pearls
Round the neck of our children
Is for ever burst and scattered!
Woe! the clear and brilliant mirror,
Fallen out of our hand,
Fallen to the ground, and broken!
Woe! the wrath of God Almighty,
Floods of fiery indignation,
Beating on the lofty mountains,
Swept their summit to the ground!
Like the enemies at night,
Breaking into peaceful houses,